

"The Red Mazeppa," by Albert W. Aiken, author of "The Wolf Demon," and Capt. Mayne Reid's "Tracked to Death," in this number.

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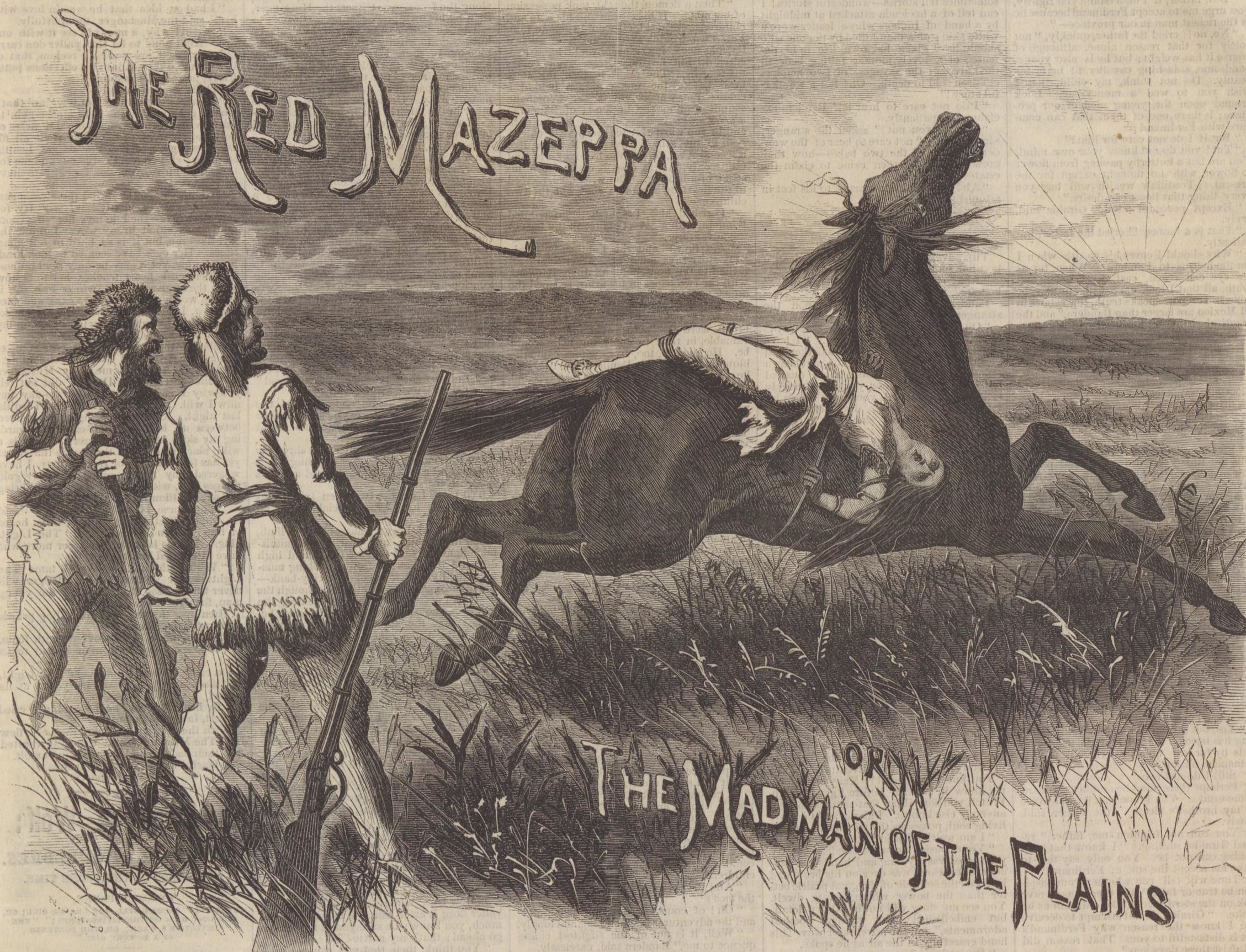
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It was a black steed, covered with foam, and it bore a helpless woman lashed to its back.

TRUTH IN LOVE.

BY JAMES HUNTERFORD.

Say not there is no truth in love,
Nor end my only dream of bliss;
My heart is full of love, though
I am among faithless hearts from this.

I can not think that truth exists;

Alone in realms beyond the blue;

My heart, so constant, still insists;

That other hearts are constant, too.

The earth would be a desert wide,

Without a virgin's spot for rest;

If living souls could never rest;

In such those they love the best.

Without the peace and joys that flow

From heaven-descended love and trust,

This world were but a funeral show—

Its proper legend, "Dust to dust."

Believe me, love is ever true,

Though passion vail its glow from sight,

As long as life is given to the heart,

When hid in day's exceeding light,

Yes, love no change or passion bears;

And while the ceaseless ages roll;

It blooms—unfading as the stars;

Immortal as the human soul.

The Red Mazeppa: OR, THE MADMAN OF THE PLAINS.

A STRANGE STORY OF THE TEXAN FRONTIER!

[RIGHT OF DRAMATIZATION RESERVED.]

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KIT," "WOLF DEMON," "ACE OF SPADES," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE CANYON DE UVA.

"Still he urges on his wild career."

Down through the dark and fearful chasm
of the rocks, called by the Mexicans the
Canyon de Uva, and by the Indians, the
"Gate to Hell," ran the waters of the Rio
Sabinal.

The stream had laughed and danced along
over the shelving rocks, rippling golden
in the sunlight, but as it entered the frowning
portals of the canyon it became a dull and
sluggish stream—a river of ink. The dark

walls of the canyon, stretching upward as
regular as though piled by giant hands in
far-off ages, with a stern and angry frown
forbade the sunbeams to toy with the pure
and sparkling waters.

The red braves had aptly named the
gloomy passage when they called it the portal
to the shades below.

Many a dark and gloomy legend the old
men of the Comanche and Apache tribes
told of "The Gate to Hell."

Not a red brave for a hundred miles
around would trust himself within the
gloomy canyon after the evening shadows
had closed in upon the earth and the night
winds stirred the long grasses and the gay
flowers that hid the surface of the prairie;

and yet many a brave warrior trod in the
Comanche moccasin or wore the plumed
head-dress of the Apache nation. But the
wild children of the prairie dreaded the
evil spirits who—so wise men said—lurked
within the gloomy canyon's center. They
feared not a human foe, but the demon
forms of the Gate to Hell, they shrank from.

The sun was sinking in the west; its last
dying rays decked the prairie with a flood
of golden light; the surface of the river
shimmered with crimson and purple, strange-
ly blended in together.

All was peace and rest; it was the calm
of the wilderness—of nature in her wildest
freedom unrestrained by the curbing hand
of man.

Slowly the sun went down; slowly
the bright tints faded into cold and somber
gray; slowly the shades of eventide shut
in over the prairie, the river and the can-
yon.

And with the darkness came a strange,
peculiar sound; a sound that hushed the
laugh of the rippling waters, and stilled the
gentle rustling of the flowers waving in the
dreamy breeze.

The echoes of the canyon rung out low
and mockingly on the still air.

All nature seemed appalled.

Then with a scream, half human in its

intensity of despair, a fearful thing dashed
at headlong speed from the dark shadows
of the gloomy gorge.

Half beast, half human!
A noble black horse, clean in limb, per-
fect in form and bearing the arching neck
and symmetrical head, that told of Arabian
blood—or fair descent from the steeds of
the desert, shod as with fire.

And on the back of the horse a rider that
seemed a part of the steed.

A young and beautiful girl!

The warm color that flushed her skin
told plainly that in her veins there ran the
blood of two nations; mingled there was
the "blue" blood of the Spaniard and the
red life-current of the Indian, the master
of the prairie.

Strange was the position in which she
rode.

She was extended at full length upon the
back of the horse, lying with her face up-
ward. Strong lines of untanned leather,
bound around her wrists and ankles, held
her in her place.

Little wonder that she seemed a part of
the horse, for she could move neither hand
nor foot.

The cruel lashings cut into her flesh, and
the dark-hued skin was swollen and bruised.
The closed eyes and drooping head told that
the girl was senseless.

She was habited in the fanciful Indian
costume; the hunting-shirt reaching to the
knee, and the dainty limbs below, so round
and shapely, protected by gayly-fringed leath-
erings. Her long hair, fine as silk and black
as night's ebony mantle, floated down over
the horse's shoulders in wild confusion.

The slight movement of the lips, as the
faintly-drawn breath came through them,
told that the girl still lived, although she
seemed more like a corpse than aught else.

On went the horse at his topmost speed;
his heaving flanks, and the white foam that
dropped from his mouth, showed plainly
that he was exerting his utmost strength.

A hundred yards or so had the unshod
hoofs of the flying steed countered on the
prairie, when, from the dark recesses of the
canyon—forth from the Gate to Hell—came

a howling pack of great, gaunt wolves.

Huge beasts with flaming eyes and snap-
ping jaws.

As the leader of the pack, a gray veteran
whose shaggy coat bore many a scar, be-
held the flying steed, a howl went up from
his jaws that was answered by the rest of
the fierce and famished brutes.

The horse, quivering with fright, dashed
onward at headlong speed, but tirelessly be-
hind came the pack.

Well was it for the dark-hued maid that
sense had forsaken her—that she was uncon-
scious of her peril.

For what crime had one so beautiful been
doomed thus to ride to death—a red Ma-
zeppa?

CHAPTER II.

THE HEIR TO BANDERA.

FIVE miles above the town of Dhanis, on
the Rio Sego, stood the hacienda of Bandera,
a goodly mansion, built of unburnt
brick, in the Mexican fashion. The ab-
sence of windows, and the loopholes for
musketry that pierced the walls, indicated
that the building had been framed for de-
fense as well as for shelter.

And so it was, for Dhanis was on the fron-
tier, beyond it lay the hunting-grounds of the
wild red braves, who claimed the prairie as
their own. Every now and then, with fire
and steel, they swept down along the whole
line of the Mexican frontier, for at the time
of which we write, the Lone Star banner
had not yet been planted on the prairie, and
Texas was yet a Mexican province. Little
by little the savage warriors forced back the
line of civilization, and every year they
held the ground they won. No wonder
then that they despised the Mexicans, and
laughed at them in derision.

Within the principal apartment of the
Mexican mansion sat a middle-aged, stern-
faced man, and a young and beautiful girl.
The two were father and daughter.

Ponce de Bandera was a man of fifty.
Though his hair and beard were grizzled,
and his face lined by the unrelenting fingers
of time, yet he was as straight in figure and
as firm in step as when, thirty years before,
he had worn the steel morion of the soldier,
and kept step to the martial music that

heralded the advent of the ruling Span-
iard.

Giralda, the sole daughter of the house of
Bandera, was a girl of twenty. In person
she was tall and straight, a very queen in
bearing; her face a perfect oval, set in coils
of jet-black hair; her eyes, black at night,
sparkling like coals of fire, and yet as soft
as velvet in their liquid tenderness.

Few could pass the queenly Giralda with-
out the wish for a second glance.

The face of the father was stern and for-
bidding as he gazed upon his child. Evi-
dently he was disconcerted.

"Giralda, you are a foolish girl!" he ex-
claimed, impatiently; "you act without
sense or reason. From your haughty bear-
ing one would think that you owned all
Mexico."

"Am I not the heiress of Bandera?" the father
said, slowly, a peculiar expression on his
dark face.

"Yes; ever since I can remember, that
has been told me. When I was but a child,
the herdsman, who took me in his arms,
and on the back of a flying steed galloped
with me over the prairie, pointed out the
countless herds of cattle, the vast droves of
horses, then waved his hand in a circle
around him, and said, 'All this is yours, lit-
tle one; you are the heiress of Bandera.
Twenty thousand acres are trod by the hoofs
of your father's herds, all yours.' Have I
not reason to be proud, then?"

"Be careful, else your pride may have a
fall," said the old man, significantly. "Re-
member that this young man is one of the
greatest land-holders in our province; his
family, too, is good; the Tordilla can hold
up their heads in the presence of royalty it-
self. They trace back their line to Ruy
Diaz, the Cid, the Champion of Bivar."

"And yet, with all his wealth—with all
his high descent, I do not care for Ferdi-
nand Tordilla," replied Giralda, carelessly.

"And therefore are you a foolish child,"
retorted the father, harshly. "What other
young man in our province can compare

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with him? If he so willed, he could build you a palace of golden ounces."

"One of the herdsmen once gave me a nightingale; the lattice that held him prisoner was a gilded one, but the poor bird pined for the branches of the pinion tree, and the flowers of the prairie; he beat his wings against his prison bars until his heart broke; and then he found freedom in the grave. The arms of the man I could not love would be prison bars to me; like the bird, I should struggle to escape. Gold is powerful, father, but love more powerful still."

"And do you love?" cried the father, quickly.

For a second a glance of fire shone in Giralda's dark eyes, and then the ebony-fringed lids hid them from view.

"I love—" she said, slowly, "yes, I love you, father."

"And no one else?" he demanded, quickly.

"Who else should I love?" she replied, softly.

"You are playing with me, Giralda," the old man said sternly. "I have eyes, and I know you too well to be deceived. You object to the suit of Ferdinand Tordilla, because you fancy some one else."

But, father, if I understand you rightly, you urge me to accept Ferdinand because he is the highest man in our province—"

"No, no!" cried the father, quickly, "not solely for that reason alone, although of course it has weight; but he is also young, handsome, a dashing cavalier, fit mate for beauty. Do not think, my child, that I wish you to wed a money-bag. Look around upon the young men of our province; is there one of them that can compare with Ferdinand?"

"But if I do not care for him?"

"Tut! you do not know your own mind. You are but a butterfly passing from flower to flower, with no thought except for the present. Tordilla's wealth will buy you every thing that heart can desire."

"Except peace of mind," Giralda said, dryly.

"That is a fantasy!" cried the father, impatiently.

"Why should I covet his wealth when I am the heiress to Bandera?" When, far as the eye can reach, east, west, north and south, all that I look upon will one day be mine? If report speaks truth, few estates in all Mexico are larger than Bandera; and the beautiful girl raised her head with a gesture of pride as she spoke.

"Suppose some sudden blow should rob you of these broad acres, what then?" the old man asked, meaningfully.

"That can never be," the girl replied, confidently. "Who can destroy yonder prairie, drive off the herds of cattle that fatten on its surface, or remove the ounces of gold that the bankers of Mexico hold to your credit?"

"Five hundred paces from the hacienda rolls the Rio Sego; it is calm and placid, now, a child might brave its power; yet I have seen it, a giant in strength, sweeping along the mighty pinion trees, and the tall cottonwoods on its bosom as though they were but straws. Some day the Sego may rise again and spread desolation and despair along its banks. Then, too, a hundred miles to the north there dwells a race of feather-garnished warriors; their skins are red, their hearts not white. The great Comanche chief, whom his brethren call the White Mustang, has sworn never to rest while the hacienda of Bandera guards the approach to Dhanis. Some day the red chiefs will come with fire and steel, and then, the vulture and the wolf will make their home here."

"I do not fear, father," replied the girl, proudly. "The Comanches came last year, but when they retreated many an Indian pony who had borne a living warrior, carried a dead one."

"Yes, but since that time, the White Mustang has become the chief of the tribe; and he is by far the ablest warrior in all the Comanche nation."

"Still I do not fear."

"Perhaps there may be another claimant to the estate. You know that it came to me by my brother's death," the father said, slowly.

"You can not frighten me, father," replied Giralda, smiling. "I know that such a thing can not be. You only say this to make me accept the suit of Ferdinand."

"Time will tell you whether your suspicion be true or false?" and there was a grave look on the stern face of the old man as he spoke. "Giralda, do not attempt to deceive me; I know the reason why Ferdinand's suit is distasteful to you. That reason did not exist three days ago."

"Do you think so, father?" and there was a half-smile on Giralda's proud face as she spoke.

"Yes, for just three days ago, the American, whom the herdsmen call Gilbert the Mustang, came to Dhanis."

A burning blush swept over Giralda's face, and the long lashes closed down over the dark eyes.

An angry look clouded the face of the Mexican as he watched the play of Giralda's features.

"If I had doubted, your face now would have removed my doubts," he said, with a bitter accent. "For the sake of this unknown adventurer, whose only future lies in his rifle, his hunting-knife and lasso, you reject the hand of the richest gentleman in all our province. By the saints, girl, I swear you are mad! What witchcraft lies in the blue eyes of this American that should fascinate you at the first glance, as the snake fascinates the bird?"

Giralda did not reply, but her glowing cheeks and downcast eyes betrayed her secret.

"Girl, I would rather see you in your grave than married to this American adventurer," the father exclaimed, harshly. "Banish him from your thoughts, for with my consent you shall never see him again."

Without a word, Giralda rose and left the apartment, but the expression upon her face boded defiance rather than submission.

An angry frown was upon Ponce de Bandera's brow as he watched the heavy door close after his daughter's light form.

"I shall have some trouble in bending her to my will," he muttered, "but she must obey. The blow may fall at any time which robs us of these broad acres and makes us beggars."

A servant conducting a stranger into the apartment interrupted the meditations of the old man.

Looking up, Bandera beheld a rather shabbily dressed man, whose garments were covered with dust. In person the stranger was above the medium height, and his massive and well-knit frame gave promise of great strength; his face was handsome, lit

up by great black eyes, fringed by coal-black hair, worn long, and falling in wavy masses down along his neck; a long narrow mustache graced his upper lip. The face of the stranger bore evident marks of toil and exposure to sun and wind. There was a rakish look about the man that betrayed the adventurer in every movement; cruel lines about the eyes and mouth that told of fierce animal passions.

Bandera gazed with astonishment upon the newcomer.

The stranger nodded familiarly to the Mexican, and then addressed the servant.

"Son of my heart, you needn't wait—you can get out—vamose! Your master and I have business to transact in private."

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"Exactly; Juan Bandera, in disgust, left the gay world, and sought for consolation amid the wild-flowers of the prairie. His penniless cousin kept a close watch upon him. Not content with robbing him of his heart's idol, he thirsted after his broad acres. He thought that despair might kill; but Juan de Bandera took the most cruel revenge. In a hunting excursion on the prairie, he found a young Indian girl. She was but a child, barely fifteen. She had been badly wounded by a fierce buffalo. The Mexican took her home, cured her hurt, then married her. When the news of the marriage was brought to your ears—I beg ten thousand pardons, señor, I mean to the ears of Ponce de Bandera—the name is so like yours, that half the time I think you are the man.

"Well, as I have said, when the news reached him, he swore a bitter oath, and within two more years he swore more bitterly still, for a son and daughter were born to him. Small chance was there of his ever inheriting the estates of Bandera. Then the wife of Ponce died; this was a terrible blow for he loved her with all the passion that his iron nature was capable of. Like his cousin, he, too, possessed a son and daughter, heirs to his poverty.

"Then a demon thought took possession of his mind. If his cousin and his wife and children were dead, all would come to him. Few men would have thought of such a terrible deed, fewer still would have executed it, but he did. Now, señor, comes the tragedy. The night is dark, the stars in bed, and the moon hidden behind a cloud; the war-whoop of the Comanche sounds around the hacienda of Bandera; white-skinned Indians, decked in the garb and in the war-paint of the prairie chiefs, rush to the attack. Juan de Bandera, like a second Abel, fell by the hand of a second Cain; only, in this case, it was a cousin instead of a brother. The wife died, pierced to the heart by a random shot, but the two children—"

"Perished also, I suppose," interrupted Bandera, with a covert glance in the face of the adventurer.

"Did they?" and the Panther laughed; "my story says different. A herdsmen attached to the household of Juan Bandera, with the two babes in his arms, escaped the attack, and on a fleet horse sought safety, and found it, on the prairie. This herdsmen was a cunning knave; he knew how broad were the acres of Bandera; how valuable, in time to come the heirs would be. He guessed, too, from whom came the blow that cost Juan Bandera his life. So he placed the two babes in safety, and sought for fortune elsewhere. Years came and went; now the herdsmen has returned; he thinks it's time that the world should understand who are the heirs of Bandera. Take a good look at me, señor; I am something older than I was twenty years ago; somewhat more brawny in muscle and darker in color, but I feel sure that you will remember me."

"You are the herdsmen," Bandera said, slowly.

"Your wisdom does credit; I am the herdsmen. To speak more plainly, I am the man who holds the destinies of the estates of Bandera in his hand," and the adventurer closed his broad palm significantly.

"I do not understand you," Bandera said, doubtfully.

"The saints forbid that I should tell you that you lie, to your teeth and in your own house, but you do, never-the-less," the Panther said, coolly.

"You will excuse me if I doubt that,"

"In five minutes I will remove your doubts," said the adventurer, confidently.

"Do you think that possible?"

"Listen to my wonderful story, and judge."

"Go on."

"Twenty years ago, Juan de Bandera, your cousin, possessed the vast estates now held by you."

"There is nothing wonderful in that statement," interrupted Bandera; "that fact is known to all who resided in this neighborhood twenty years ago."

"Don't be impatient, and don't interrupt me, or you will make me lose the thread of my story," replied the adventurer, coolly.

"You know that good! Many other people know it better!" Before I get through, I'll tell you something that neither you nor anybody else knows. I alone, and no other living soul, possesses the wonderful secret."

"I am waiting," said Bandera, dryly.

"Your cousin, Juan de Bandera, twenty years ago, was a young and handsome cavalier, but a cloud was ever on his brow and he lived the solitude of the great prairie better than the bower where beauty dwelt. You see my story will not be all dry detail, but embellished with sundry poetical adorments," and the adventurer waved his hand gracefully in the air as he spoke.

"Proceed, sir."

"Twenty years ago, Juan de Bandera, your cousin, possessed the vast estates now held by you."

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thee; and thou, stout men-at-arms, who ride at Liderick's command, mourn for thy leader, for the ax of the "Wolf" has bit deep into the morion of the trusty soldier!

On pushed Ludwig and his band, bearing the lovely Anna—on through the darkness of the night. Deep they spur; fast they ride; until before them they see the dark towers of Enhoven.

Anna had revived during the flight. Better for her, perhaps, had she never woken again, for she was a helpless victim in the hands of her father's deadliest foe.

The party dismounted and entered the castle. Anna was given in charge of two women, the wives of some of the Free Lances, and they conveyed her to a spacious and well-furnished apartment. Refreshments were set before her, which the women pressed her to eat; but her thoughts were far removed from mere bodily comforts. Her mind returned again and again to her lover, stricken down helpless at her feet. In agony she asked herself if they were never to meet again. Not until this moment did she fully realize how much and truly she loved him.

Meanwhile Ludwig was among his assembled soldiers in the great hall of the castle, where the wassail rung loud and long.

A motley crew were these soldiers of fortune—Free Lances, as they were termed—men who fought for hire, and whose life and being hung on their swords. All nations of Europe were represented in that band. Here was the ruddy-faced Englishman who had fought under the Red Cross banner on many a bloody field; here the mercurial Frenchman, who would risk limb and life for the sake of boasting of some fair lady's kiss; here the yellow-haired and sluggish Fleming, the swarthy Spaniard, and Italy's dark son, who many a tale could tell of four assassination and secret poison; cutthroats, outcasts from their country and their kin, and yet, withal, good soldiers.

A shout of welcome greeted the entrance of their chief. Ruffian-like, they respected and feared him, because he was the stronger. As has been said, few soldiers in Germany were as good as Ludwig, the Wolf of Enhoven.

"Free Lances of Enhoven!" and the clear voice of Ludwig resounded through the hall, "the men-at-arms of Cleves, of Gueldres and of Hanault are gathering in yonder city, to assault our tower. Arnold of Gueldres has forgotten the fate of his soldiers two years ago when they ran like whipped curs from the shadow of our fortalice, and sought for refuge within the walls of their accursed city. The best soldier that they boast, stout Liderick du Bucq, will not lead the lances of Gueldres against the tower of Enhoven, for he has felt the teeth of the "Wolf" this night, and 'tis not likely he'll ever draw sword again."

A wild shout declared the pleasure of the outlaws; they had not forgotten the prowess of the young soldier, two years before, and since that time they had witnessed the flash of his long rapier in many a petty skirmish, and never had they encountered him but defeat and disaster had befallen them.

Ludwig smiled grimly as he beheld the effect of his words. He continued:

"Followers of the 'Wolf,' the men of Gueldres to-morrow will seek us in Enhoven's tower. If we beat them, ere a month has passed, we'll seek them in the town of Gueldres; and the sluggish burghers will tremble when they hear the howl of the 'Wolf' ringing through their streets."

Again a wild shout from the Free Lances; and visions of plunder and riot in helpless and sacked Gueldres danced before their eyes.

"These noble gentlemen have sworn to give us no quarter; so take no prisoners in the coming fight, but kill all, whether burgher or gentle," said the "Wolf," fiercely. "Stuifnel, send out scouts to give us advance of the approach of the foe," and, with this order, the "Wolf" left them to visit his prisoner.

Stuifnel, though, did not obey at once; he had been absent in the city for fully a month, acting as a spy. Ludwig, for nearly a year, had been scheming to abduct Anna, the fairest of whose beauty resounded throughout all Brabant. Of course the spy had much to tell his comrades, so that nearly an hour passed before he obeyed the order of Ludwig, and dispatched the scouts. That delay worked a wondrous change in the fortunes of the "Wolf," as will be seen hereafter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SURPRISE.

LUDWIG passed to an anteroom, and removed his helmet. Let us describe him as he stands there in all the pride of manhood and of strength.

The "Wolf" had seen perhaps twenty-five years, though care and the toil of warfare made him look much older. His face was large, and of the pure German type. A bluish-gray eye, with a glance as quick and piercing as that of a hawk; a large nose, hooked like the beak of an eagle; small, thin lips, closely compressed together, while a pointed beard of the same hue covered his chin. His hair was a golden yellow, worn long, and falling almost to his shoulders, with ends curled under.

As we have said, Ludwig's face was purely German, as was also his name; and yet, his spurs were won, and his fame first made in Italy, of which it was said he was a native. If this were so, his was a strange face for an Italian.

He opened the door and entered the room wherein sat the prisoner, fair Anna of Gueldres. She started at his approach, and gazed curiously upon him, with looks not unmixed with apprehension. The two women retired.

"Lady, I trust you have recovered from your fright?" said the "Wolf," courteously.

"Yes, sir," replied Anna. "You are Ludwig of Enhoven?" she then asked, for the "Wolf" had often been described to her, and she recognized the likeness.

"So I am called, lady."

"Why have I been dragged from my home? What wrong have I ever done to you that you should commit this outrage?" questioned Anna.

"Fair lady, you have never wronged me, and most humbly I crave your pardon for this act."

"Your motive, then?"

"A few words will explain," said the robber chief. "Over all our land—throughout Flanders and Brabant, ay, even in France itself—Anna, of Gueldres, is spoken of as being the fairest maiden that e'er the sun looked upon. Not only do they call you beautiful, lady, but they say that the gentleness and goodness of your disposition

are equaled only by the beauty of your face."

Thus spoke the "Wolf," in, for him, a singularly winning tone. Anna blushed, and her eyes sought the ground in visible confusion at these warm praises; but a few more words from Ludwig and she raised her head, with a tinge of anger burning on her cheeks.

"Half Germany said 'Anna d' Egmont' is the loveliest lady in our land,' and the other half said 'Ludwig, of Enhoven, is the bravest lance.' I do not say this in compliment to myself, but only to explain my position. What then more natural than that Ludwig should fall in love with Anna, although he had never seen her, and that he should desire her for his wife?" cried Anna.

"Yes, your wife?" cried Anna.

"Yes, lady, with the aid of some good, holy monk, and your consent."

"That you shall never have!" said Anna, impetuously.

"Then I'll do without it," said the "Wolf," coolly. "I fain would have come to Gueldres openly, and pressed my suit, but that your father and I are not on good terms. For the last time he visited me, two years ago, I gave him such a warm reception that, but for the young soldier, whom tonight I struck down beneath my ax, he would have stayed here forever, and found a snug resting-place in the mout at the base of my walls. Therefore, to win you was but one way, and that was to use the cunning and the strength of the wolf, whose name I bear."

"No priest will dare to wed the daughter of Gueldres' Count to an outlaw such as you are!" said Anna, all her father's spirit speaking in her voice.

"A man will do much to save his life; and every monk that falls within my hands, that refuses to perform the ceremony, shall die."

"Oh, have you no heart?" pleaded Anna, tears filling her eyes.

"Yes, a heart that is full of love for thee; that is, such love as I can feel, which is not much, I own. Still, such as it is, all shall be thine. I like thee, Anna, although I never before set eyes upon thee. Thou hast best consent freely to the union, for I tell thee frankly—mine thou shalt be, with the rites of the church, if thou dost confess; but in either case I will possess thee; and if thou wilt not listen to reason, then force shall accomplish my object. I would not deceive thee, Anna, even to save my soul, which the worthy monks say is in Satan's keeping already. I have told you what you may expect; so be prepared to abide the consequences!"

"Villain!" cried Anna, feeling that she was indeed helpless in his power; "to-morrow the troops of Gueldres come, and they will tear me from thy hands!"

"To-morrow! ho! ho!" laughed the "Wolf," and the harsh tones grated fearfully on the ear of his destined victim. "To-morrow will be too late to save thee from the press of Flemish steel; and, with new hopes, if thou wilt not listen to reason, then force shall accomplish my object. I would not deceive thee, Anna, even to save my soul, which the worthy monks say is in Satan's keeping already. I have told you what you may expect; so be prepared to abide the consequences!"

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SATURDAY JOURNAL.

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BLOWING BUBBLES.

BY MALCOLM TAYLOR, JR.

A weary with playing
Out in the cold street,
The frolicsome Freddie,
Who knows not a seat,
Makes manmakin' get somethin'
To do when he's killed,
A clay pipe or tumbler,
With soap-water filled.

So soon in his glory,
With breath soft and slow,
Are Freddie's cheeks swelling,
Bright bubbles to blow;
Up to the swelling,
A trumpet and ball,
Each rises so airy,
Or faintly does fall.

So round and so radiant,
Each rich rainbow hue,
Their surface reflecting
Red, green, orange, blue;
But just for a moment
The bubble's burst stay,
Till at the touch bursting,
They vanish away.

Ah! many men thoughtful
Their bubbles do blow,
Fair lines of the promised arch
Brightly to show;
But when fullest floating,
A touch does each break,
And leaves him with nothing,
Or new ones to make.

Tracked to Death: THE LAST SHOT.

BY CAPT. MAYNE REID,
AUTHOR OF "HELPLESS HAND," "LOVE RANCH,"
"SCALP HUNTERS," "WHITE CHIEF," ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SMOOTH-BORE BULLET.

CHARLES CLANCY missing had been the mystery of the morning. This, while there were hopes of his being alive. Now that these hopes were no more—that all believed him to be dead—most of them feeling quite certain of it—as great, if not greater, mystery was, that his body was missing. Indeed, no one doubted his death, nor that it had been brought about by violence—that he had been killed. The sign was sufficient evidence. The blood upon the ground—there was a pool of it, or had been before it became congealed—seemed enough to have emptied the veins of any ordinary man. It was scarcely possible that a body so depleted could still be alive. Besides, no living man would have so left his hat and gun behind him.

And yet, if dead, what had become of the corpse? An equal mystery. If carried away, why had these things been left? Who could have carried it away? Wherefore, and whither? And for what reason surreptitiously? An accumulation of mysteries!

Puzzled, confused, almost awed by them, the searchers at length left the ground. Not, however, until after giving it that sort of investigation that satisfies the instincts of a crowd. They had spent most part of a day in this, without thinking of aught else, not even of their dinners. But night was approaching; they had grown hungry; and one after another hurried toward their homes; at first in odd individuals, then in straggling groups, the movement at length extending to the main body of those who composed the searchers. They went home, determined to return on the following day, and, if necessary, renew the search.

Only two men stayed—Simeon Woodley and a companion, a young backwoodsman like himself, a professional hunter.

"I'm darned glad they're gone off!" said Woodley, as soon as the two were left alone. "Dan Boone himself couldn't take up a track w' such a noisy clanjanfery 'round him. I've took notice o' somethin', Ned, the which I didn't weesh to make known while they war about—"specially while Dick Darke war on the ground." Let's go now, and see if there's any thing to be made out o' it."

The young hunter, whose name was Heywood—Edward Heywood—simply made sign of assent, and followed his elder comrade.

After walking about two hundred yards through the forest, Woodley made a stop beside a cypress "knee" with his face toward it, and his eyes fixed upon a spot nearly on a level with his chin. It was one of the largest of those singular vegetable excrements that perplex the botanist.

"You see that, Ned?" said the old hunter, at the same time extending his finger to point out something near the summit of the "knee."

The last Heywood did not need. His eyes were already on the object.

"I see a bullet-hole, sure; and something red around the edge of it. Looks like blood?"

"It air blood, an' nothin' else. It's a bullet-hole, too; and the bit o' lead lodged in it has fust passed through some critter's flesh. Else why shed that 'a' been blood up on it? Let's dig it out, and see what we kin make o' it."

Woodley took a knife from his pocket, and, springing open the blade, inserted it into the bark of the cypress, close to the bullet-hole. He did this dexterously and with caution, taking care not to touch the encrusted orifice the ball had made, or in any way alter its appearance. Making a circular incision around, and gradually deepening it, he at length extracted the piece of lead from the tree with the wood in which it was imbedded. He knew there was a gun-bullet inside. The point of his knife-blade told him so. He had probed the hole before commencing to cut it out.

Weighing the piece of wood in his hand, and then passing it into that of his companion, he said:

"Ned, this here chunk o' timmer's got a bullet inside o' it that niver kim out o' any rifle. That's big ends o' an ounce weight of it. Only a smooth-bore keed 'a' discharged such a lot o' lead."

"You're right there," answered Heywood, in like manner testing the ponderosity of the piece. "It's the ball of a smooth-bore, no doubt o' it."

"Well, then, who carries a smooth-bore through these woods? Who, Ned Heywood?"

"I know only one man who does it." "Name him! Name the durn rascal!" "Dick Darke."

"Ye may drink afore me, Ned. That's the skunk I war a-thinkin' bout, an' hev been all the day. I seed other sign beside this, the which escaped the eyes o' the rest. An' I'm glad it did, for I didn't want Dick Darke to be about when I war follerin' it up. For that reezeun I drawed the people aside; so as none o' em' shed notice it. By good luck they didn't."

"What other sign have you seen?"

"Tracks in the mud close in by the edge o' the swamp. They're a good bit from the place whar the poor young fellur hez gone down, an' makin' away from it. I jest got a glimpse at them, an' keed see they'd been made by a man runnin'. I'll bet my head on't they war made by a pair o' boots I've seen Dick Darke wearin'. It's too gloomy now to make anythin' out o' them. So le's you an' me go by ourselves in the mornin' at the earliest o' daybreak, afore the people get about. Then we kin give them tracks a thorror scrutation. If they don't prove to be Dick Darke's, then call Simeon Woodley a thick-headed woodchuck."

"How shall we know them? If we only had his boots, so that we might compare them?"

"If! Thar's no if. We shall hev his boots—boun' to hev 'em."

"But how are we to get them?"

"Leave that to me. I've tho't o' a plan to git pursesoon o' the skunk's futwear an' every thin' else belon'g to him that kin throw light on this dark bizness. Come, Ned, le's go now to the widder's house an' see if we kin say a word o' comfort to the poor lady, for a lady she air. Believe enough this thing'll be her death-blow. She warn't strong at best, an' she's been a deal weaker since the husban' died. Now the son's good too. Come on, Heywood. Let's show her she ain't forsook by ever'body."

"I'm with you, Woodley!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

To the mother of Charles Clancy it was a day of terrible suspense while they were abroad searching for her son. Far more fearful the night after they had returned—not without tidings of the missing man. Such tidings! The too certain assurance of his death—of his having been assassinated, with no trace of the assassin—no clue to the whereabouts of his body.

The mother's grief, hitherto kept in check by a still lingering hope, now escaped all bounds, and became truly agonizing. Her heart seemed broken; if not, surely was it breaking. Although, in her poverty, without many friends, she was not left alone in her sorrow. It could not be so in the far South-west. Several of her neighbors—rough backwoodsmen though they were—had kind hearts under their coarse homespun, determined to stay with her all night.

They remained outside in the porch, smoking their pipes, and discussing the events of the day, and the mystery of the murder.

At first they talked cautiously, two and two, and only in whispers. These gradually became mutterings pronounced in louder tone; while the name of Richard Darke could be heard frequently. He, of course, was not among the men remaining in the widow Clancy's cottage.

Soon the conversation grew general, those who took part in it expressing themselves more openly; until, at length, Dick Darke—as, for short, his neighbors called him—became the sole topic of their discourse.

His behavior during the day had not escaped their notice. Even the most stolid among them had observed a strangeness in it. By his counterfeited zeal he had overdone himself. The sharpest of the searchers only saw this; but all were more or less struck with something besides surprise—surprise in short—when they saw the dog turn upon, and bark at him. What could that mean?

Just as one had put this interrogatory, and answers or surmises were being offered, the same dog—the hound—was again heard giving tongue. The animal had sprung out from the porch and commenced barking, as if some person was making approach to the house. Almost simultaneously the little wicket gate in front was heard turning on its hinges.

A hired negro boy, who was attached to the establishment, quieted the dog; and then spoke to the party who had lifted the gate latch. Only a few muttered words were exchanged. Then the boy returned to the house; two men following close upon his heels. They were Simeon Woodley and Ned Heywood.

The others, recognizing, rose to receive them, and the two hunters became part of the conclave which was still discussing the events of the day.

Woodley—looked up to by all as the man most likely to throw light on the series of mysteries perplexing them—soon became the chief speaker; the rest hearkening to him as if he were an oracle.

There was no loud talking done. On the contrary, the discussion was carried on in a low tone—at times almost in whispers—the little group permitted to take part in it, keeping their heads close together, so that the women and domestics should not hear what was said.

They who thus deliberated were in darkness. At least there was no light in the porch where they sat, except what came from the occasional flash of a candle carried across the corridor from room to room. When this flashed over their faces, it showed there, upon one and all of them, an expression different from that likely to be called forth by an ordinary conversation. Eyes could be seen sparkling with a passion, as of anger, ill held in restraint; lips tightly pressed upon teeth that seemed set determinedly on some purpose wanting only an additional word to give it the cue for action.

The same candle's gleam revealed the form of Simeon Woodley in the center of the group, holding in his hand an object that, without being told what it was, no one could have guessed. They to whom he was exhibiting it knew well. It was a piece of cypress wood, inside which was the bullet of a gun. They had received full explanations as to how the ball had been found thus buried, and saw the blood-stained ring around the orifice it had made on entering? In short, they had been made aware of every thing already known to the two hunters.

Darke hoped he was dead. The night before he felt sure of it; not so now. As he lay sleepless on his couch, struggling with distressed thoughts—with fears that appalled him—he would have given the best runaway nigger he had ever caught to be assured that Clancy was dead. And he would have granted half a score of his father's slaves their full freedom—cheerfully given it—if that could have guaranteed him against detection or punishment. He was being punished, if not through remorse of conscience, by craven fear. He knew now how hard it is to sleep the sleep of the assassin, or lie wakeful upon a murderer's bed.

His midnight agony was easy, compared with that he was called upon to endure when the morning light came through the window of his chamber, and along with it voices. They were many and strange, all

scarce slept at all. Two causes kept him awake—the weight of guilt upon his soul, and the sting of scornful words yet ringing in his ear—these last uttered by the woman he so wildly loved.

Either should have been sufficient to torture him, and did—the last more than the first. He had little remorse for having killed the man, but great chagrin at having been slighted by the woman. The slight had contributed to the crime, making the latter less repented of. Had it served its purpose there would have been no thought of repentance. But it had not. He had done a murder, and made nothing out of it. For this reason only did he regret what he had done.

In his half-waking, half-dreaming slumbers, he fancied he could hear the howling of a hound. It awoke him; but when awake he thought no more of it, or only with a transient apprehension. His thoughts were of Helen Armstrong—of her scorn, and his discomfiture. This was a sure thing now; and he could no longer hope. Next morning she would be gone from him forever. A steamboat, leaving Natchez at the earliest hour of day, would convey Colonel Armstrong, with all his belongings, far away from the place. It would know them no more; and he, Richard Darke, in all probability, would never again set eyes on the woman he loved—so madly as to have committed murder for her sake.

"Why the devil did I do it?"

In this coarse shape did he express himself, as he lay upon his couch, lightly thinking of the foul deed, but weightily grieving how little it had availed him.

Such were his reflections on the first night after it. Far different were they on the second. Then Helen Armstrong was no more in his thoughts, or only having a secondary place in them. Then the howls of the hound were heard, or fancied, more frequently. They did not startle him from his sleep, for he slept not at all. All night long he lay thinking of his crime, or rather of the peril in which it had placed him.

The events of the day had given him a clearer comprehension of things; and he now knew he was in danger. No one had said any thing, to tell him that suspicion was directed upon him. Still there was the circumstance which might be known, that he and Clancy had both been aspirants to the hand of Helen Armstrong. He did not think it was known. He hoped not, as their rivalry would point to a probable motive for the murder. For all this he feared it.

He reviewed his own conduct throughout the day. During the search and in the presence of the searchers, he had borne himself satisfactorily. He had taken an active part, counterfeiting surprise, zeal, and sorrow to such effect that he was called circumstantial; and this only slight. For all, he had at times during the day come very near convulsive trembling. Not from any remorse of conscience, but a cold shiver that crept over him as he approached the spot where the deed had been done. And when he at length stood upon it, under the somber shadow of the cypress—among the moss with which he had shrouded the corpse—when he saw that it was no longer there—his fear was intensified. It became awe—dread, mysterious awe. Sure of having there left a dead body—the only one sure of this—what had become of it? Had the dead come to life again? Had Charles Clancy, shot through the breast—he had noted the place by the blood gushing from it as he held the picture before his victim's face—could Clancy have again risen to his feet? Could a man, having his body bored by a three-quarter-ounce ball, and laid prostrate along the earth, ever get up again? Was it possible for him to survive?

As the murderer put these questions to himself, on the spot where the murder had been committed, no wonder he felt awed, as well as mystified—no wonder his features showed a strange expression—one so peculiar as to have attracted attention. They who noticed it, however, had said nothing—at least, in his presence.

The dog had not been so reticent. As we have said, the dumb brute seemed also to take note of his weird, wild look, and had repeatedly barked at him.

Darke had preserved sufficient presence of mind to explain this to the searching party, telling them he had once corrected the hound while out hunting with his friend Clancy, and that ever since the animal had shown anger with him.

The tale was plausible. For all that, it did not deceive those to whom he told it. Some of them drew deductions from it still more unfavorable to the teller.

But if the mystery of the missing boy had troubled him during the day—in the hour when his blood was up, and his nerves strung with excitement—in the night—in the chill silent hours, as he lay tossing upon his couch—it more than troubled, more than awed—it horrified him. In vain he tried to compose himself by shaping out some explanation of the mystery. He could not comprehend it; he could not even form a probable conjecture. Was Clancy dead, or still living? Had he walked away from the ground? Or been carried from it, a corpse?

In either case the danger to him, Darke, would be almost equal. Better, indeed, if Clancy were dead; for then there would be but the circumstantial evidence against his assassin. If alive, he could himself give testimony of the attempt, which, criminally, would be almost the same.

Darke hoped he was dead. The night before he felt sure of it; not so now. As he lay sleepless on his couch, struggling with distressed thoughts—with fears that appalled him—he would have given the best runaway nigger he had ever caught to be assured that Clancy was dead. And he would have granted half a score of his father's slaves their full freedom—cheerfully given it—if that could have guaranteed him against detection or punishment. He was being punished, if not through remorse of conscience, by craven fear. He knew now how hard it is to sleep the sleep of the assassin, or lie wakeful upon a murderer's bed.

His midnight agony was easy, compared with that he was called upon to endure when the morning light came through the window of his chamber, and along with it voices. They were many and strange, all

speaking in tones of vengeance. The assassin sprung from his couch, and rushing across the room, looked through the open casement. It did not need this to tell him what the fracas was about. His guilty heart had already guessed it. Among the half-score horsemen, who had drawn up around the house, he recognized the sheriff of the county, and beside him two others, he knew to be constables.

These three had already dismounted, and were entering the door.

In ten seconds after they were inside his sleeping-chamber; the sheriff, as he stepped across its threshold, saying, in firm, clear voice:

"Richard Darke, I arrest you!"

"For what?"

"For the murder of Charles Clancy."

CHAPTER XVII.

A SOUTH-WESTERN SHERIFF.

In an hour after Darke's arrest he was lodged in the county jail, about three miles from his father's residence.

The men who had made him prisoner took note of every circumstance attending the arrest. They searched the chamber in which he had slept—the whole house, in fact. There were few of them who owed Ephraim Darke any goodwill, but many the contrary. His accumulated wealth, used only for selfish ends, had gained him popularity in the neighborhood. Besides, he was not a Southerner *pur sang*, as most of his neighbors were. They knew him to be from the New England States; and, although there was not a bit of Abolitionist in him, but much of the opposite, still he was not liked either by planter or "poor white."

The sheriff and his party, therefore, used little ceremony in the action accompanying the arrest: ransacking the house, and examining its most sacred *arcana*. They took possession of the double-barreled gun, which Richard was in the habit of carrying, and also the suit of clothes he usually wore when out in the woods. In the coat—it was noted that this was not the same he had on during the day of the search—was found a hole that looked as if freshly made, and by a bullet. It was through the shirt, and had a torn, tattered edge.

Among the men present when he was made prisoner were several who could read such signs, and interpret it as surely, or more surely, than an expert would identify a particular handwriting. Notably of these was the hunter Woodley. At a glance he pronounced the hole in the coat-skirt to have been made by a bullet, and one that had passed through the barrel of a rifled gun.

Several others, after looking at it, confirmed what Woodley said.

The circumstance was significant, and led to renewed conjectures among the people surrounding the sheriff.

No one thought of questioning the prisoner about it—not now that he was in the hands of the law. All further formal investigation would be postponed till the trial, soon to take place. The party arresting him only busied themselves in seeking evidence to sift at a later period.

Besides the hole through the coat-skirt the sheriff's posse found nothing else that seemed to point especially toward the crime—except the double-barreled gun. To its bore exactly fitted the bullet which the two hunters had extracted from the cypress "knee," and which was now in possession of those

know. We sailed about, sometimes with the fleet, sometimes with the Bonita, till last night, when we heard heavy cannonading. Then they took down our sails, and we rowed all night, till they landed us here in the morning, and here you have found us."

"But when were these two gentlemen mutilated in that manner?" asked Claude pointing to poor Skinner's head.

"The Rajah came on board one day, and ordered my father and me below, and we heard cries on deck. When we came up, we found these gentlemen had been treated as you see. They told us that they had been compelled to write letters to their partners, on the subject of their ransoms. The Rajah threatened to cut them to pieces if they did not do it."

"We were allowed to see Marguerite last night, that is to say, I was. I forgot to tell you that my maid, Surya, was with me till then, attending and dressing me, as she used to. But yesterday night she was taken from me, and sent to attend Marguerite. I found the poor child very glad to see me, and she told me that the Rajah had consented to set me free. At first, you know, he was going to establish a harem, the wretch, of which I was to be an ornament. But she had persuaded him to yield to her, and, in requital, she had promised to marry him."

Claude had a hard struggle to control himself here.

"While we were talking," continued Julia, "an old lady came into the cabin, who was introduced as Madame de Choiseul, Marguerite's aunt. She was very deaf, and asked me at once, 'Was not Monsieur le Comte a man magnificent, a man glorious?' When I answered that I did not know him, she did not hear me, but went on praising this generous count, who was to make her old age happy and marry her niece, Marguerite, and how they were to live somewhere, I could not catch where, for at that moment the chief devil came in—the Rajah I mean. He looked like a devil for a moment, I tell you, when he saw the old lady and heard her prattle. But the next minute he was as cool and courteous as ever, and advanced to me, saying that it was time to depart. Marguerite cried, but the old lady did not seem to understand. He explained to her that I had come from another vessel, which was going back, and so I came away."

"He must have deceived Marguerite, for she evidently thought I was set free on her account. But I was not, for papa tells me that it has cost us an immense sum of money."

"How did this Rajah take leave of you?" asked Captain Pendleton at this juncture.

"With perfect politeness. He asked if the old lady had told me anything of his future plans, but I assured him she had not, and he seemed to be satisfied. Just before he left me, which was on this island, in front of this tent, he said to me: 'You may thank the power of innocence in that child, Miss Earle, that has preserved you from harm. If it had not been for her, you would have stayed in the fleet, after your father's ransom was paid. You were not included in it. Henceforth you will hear no more of the Red Rajah. He leaves these seas forever.'"

"What does that mean, I wonder?" said Claude.

"I suppose the blackguard has determined to retire to the shades of private life," returned Pendleton. "And, indeed, if he can keep all the money he has made to himself, he will have a very respectable fortune. Well, we must be after him. The screw will be in order by to-morrow morning."

During the night the crew of the Coomanche were hard at work, clearing the screw of the thick folds of canvas in which it appeared to be inextricably entangled, and finally got it clear.

Then the Earles and their companions were put on board one of the captured prahus, to be sent to their homes at Singapore. Peyton took command of the best sailor of the lot, and bid farewell to Pendleton.

He was resolved to hunt out the Rajah, in the midst of the reefs among which the Bonita was doubtless threading her way; and with that object stood off to the east, leaving the Spice Islands in his wake.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEWS FROM HOME.

A YEAR after the events we have described in our story, Claude Peyton found himself in Calcutta, as far from the object of his search as ever. He had cruised among all the islands of Malaysia, and far out into the Pacific Ocean, but no sign of the terrible Red Rajah had he seen, since the day when he disappeared from view, with Marguerite by his side.

Where she was now, beautiful, innocent Marguerite? Had the Rajah kept his promise and married her? and where had they gone to? They had vanished from the Eastern world as completely as if they had never been.

Heart-sick and disappointed, with a weary pain at his heart that had never left him, the young Virginian sailed back to Calcutta. He passed through the heart of the Sootoo Sea, where the pirates had once held their court, and found it covered with peaceful traders. With the exit of the Red Rajah, peace returned to the seas, except near the coasts of Borneo and Celebes, where sneaking rowboat pirates still kept their haunts, to snap up unwary fishing-boats.

Claude did not stop at Singapore. He had not the heart. He was too gloomy about Marguerite's loss. He passed through the Straits of Malacca with a fair wind, and arrived at Calcutta.

Lying in the Hoogly was a frigate, recognized at once as the Oomancee. Peyton ran alongside in his weather-beaten prahu; and was soon on board, and shaking hands with his old friend Pendleton.

The two had much to talk about, Claude to narrate his fruitless expedition, Pendleton to make a confession.

"Claude, old fellow," said the captain, with something very like a blush, "I'm going to leave the service. I've sent in my resignation, and as soon as it's accepted I leave here."

"Why, where on earth are you going, Horace?" asked Peyton, surprised.

"To Singapore," said the other. "The fact is, Claude—I'm going to be married to Miss Earle—you remember her?"

"To be sure I do."

"Yes, and we're going to live in Virginia. To be sure the father is somewhat objectionable, with his absent asperities, but we shall not see him, and the lady herself is perfection, as you know."

"I congratulate you, Horace," said Claude, cordially. "As for me, I don't know what I shall do. I've found no trace of that vil-

lain, the Rajah, and poor little Marguerite is gone forever, I fear."

"Why don't you go back to the old plantation?" asked Pendleton. "It's over four years now since you have seen the old folks; and my father writes me word that they often talk about you there. By the by, there are some letters for you, lying in the post-office here. The clerk told me that they had been there for over a month. One of them was directed in your father's handwriting."

"Indeed!" said Claude, eagerly. "Then I must go and get them at once. Good-by, Horace."

"Din' with me this evening—won't you—at six," called out the captain, as the other left the cabin.

"All right. With pleasure, I mean," and Peyton booted down the side-ladder as if he had not shot.

He was very anxious to hear from home. Pendleton's account stirred up all the tender memories of his boyhood. He thought of his father and mother, now growing old; of his lost brother, Clarence, whom he had not seen for so many years. Had Clarence come home, perhaps? He rushed to the post-office, and found several letters. Two he knew at sight to be bankers' advices, with remittances from home. The third was in his father's well-known hand, and he tore it open with impatience.

It was short, and referred to a previous letter, which the writer presumed he had received at Singapore. The last words electrified him:

"As I told you in my last letter that your brother Clarence had returned home, and that we were reconciled, you will not be surprised to hear that his marriage is to take place at Christmas. During his travels he has accumulated great wealth, and his bride is worthy of him. Come home quickly, Claude. We all long to see you, and none more than—

"Your affectionate father."

"George H. Peyton."

Claude was astounded.

His brother come home, and this the first knew of it! How he wished he had stopped at Singapore! Then he would have understood it fully.

As it was, he had no time to lose. The steamer for Europe was going the next day, and he had only time to cash his remittances and take his passage, during the short business hours of Calcutta.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE END.

The evening was deliciously mild and fine. The winter had been remarkably open and dry so far, and the roads were very tolerable still. No snow had fallen yet, to convert them into those terrible quagmires that have given Virginia mud a world-wide reputation. The fields were brown and bare, it is true; the forests leafless; but the warm sunrays lay upon the wood-sides, and the quail piped among the stubble.

Flocks of wild ducks, high overhead, were winging their steady way southward through the blue sky, to find their rest in the distant marshes of South Carolina.

Every now and then, the distant report of a fowling-piece showed where some sportsman was at work, filling his game-bag.

Claude Peyton rode along the well-remembered road, by field and forest, his heart full of pleasant thoughts, mingled with a gentle sadness.

He was coming home. Home, with its sweet influences, was drawing nearer every moment. He should see his mother once more, and his dear old father, and that brother whom he only remembered as a boy.

Where had Clarence been all this time? and what was this mystery about him? The letter explained nothing. And what would he not have given could he but have known where Marguerite was! But she was gone from him forever. He should never see that graceful little figure again. She was lost to him, and in the clutches of a pirate, hidden away in some distant place in the East.

As he rode along, every thing seemed to recall his boyhood. There was the wood where he and Clarence used to hunt rabbits, long ago. That tall blasted tree on the hill-top was the same one whence he and Clarence had taken the young hawks from their nest. How bold and handsome Clarence was! What a high temper he had! Claude remembered, as if it were yesterday, the quarrel between Clarence and his father, twenty-two years ago, now; and how the boy had ridden away from the house in a passion, declaring he never would come back.

Old Colonel Peyton had not believed the threat, but Clarence had fulfilled it. He had been tracked as far as Baltimore, when his father grew anxious at last, and hunted for him. But the clue was lost there. Whether he had gone to sea or not, no one knew; but they surmised as much; for a slaver had escaped from the port a week before, and it was rumored that a boy was on board, while Clarence had saved his life, while Claude was doing his utmost against his.

It was no mysterious superstition that had saved him. The brother had recognized the mark his own hand had traced on Claude's breast, and had given him his life. How great the provocation had been to take it, Claude could judge from his own sufferings since he had lost Marguerite.

How long he sat there, gazing at those pale features, with the dark streak of blood slowly welling from the temple, he did not know. At length—it seemed an age—he heard a confused buzz of voices approaching.

Then he was surrounded by the wondering negroes, and recognized his father at their head.

Colonel Peyton was so shocked and astounded as to be incapable of superintending the removal of the body.

"Claude! Clarence! My God! What a welcome to my boy!" was all he could ejaculate.

Claude took command with his characteristic quickness.

"It is I, father," he said; "I saw him fall. Don't talk yet. We must get him out. Here, boys, one of you get on the horse's head. Quick. So. Now four of you take him by the legs. Hold on as tight as you can. He can't kick now. So. Now haul the brute off the body. Two of you take him by the arms, and drag him out. Quick. All together. So."

In a moment more the insensible Clarence Peyton was dragged clear of the feet of the animal, and in safety; when the negroes jumped away, and let the horse scramble to his feet.

Now Claude had time to hear and answer his father's anxious inquiries, while the little procession bore the injured man slowly down the hill to the home of his ancestors.

They went softly and mournfully along, till they were down by the ford, where the foaming river dashed violently over the rocky shallows. They turned then, under the grove of lofty oaks and cedars, that shaded Peyton Hall, leaving the old mill on the other side of the road. They entered the quiet, shady dell, where the stately hall was hidden from view between its two hills, while a little purpling stream ran from the spring-house in front of their door.

Slowly and sadly they bore the body up the steps, on to the broad, shady porch, that covered the front of the house.

Poor Mrs. Peyton, trembling and weeping, met them on the porch, and followed them into the room, where they laid their burden on the bed.

Small time was there for welcome to the returned one. Claude's mother sunk into his arms, weeping and moaning, while there was anxious bustle among the servants, to bring water and lint to dress the wounds. One of the men started for Culpeper at full gallop to fetch the doctor, and in the mean time every one obeyed Claude,

bay thoroughbreds, and rode with all the ease and grace of perfect equestrians. But the tall, lithe figure of the man, the air of haughty grace, the closely-buttoned suit of black, with the broad, shadowy gray hat, was unmistakable. The lady, too, small and slight, graceful as an antelope, with coils of black, shining hair around the little round head. Where had he seen her?

Not as she was now, in dark-brown riding-habit, with jaunty jockey cap on head.

No. As he looked, there flashed through his mind a vision of hot suns, waving palm trees, beds of tuberose and Jessamine, and a figure gorgeous in cloth of gold.

He knew her in a minute. IT WAS MARGUERITE. And the other, her companion, who was it, but the pirate of the Indies, THE RED RAJAH HIMSELF!

Claude Peyton dashed in the spur with involuntary cruelty, and galloped forward, shouting to the others to stop. The road to the ford in this place was as steep as the side of a house, figuratively speaking, and required great care in riding.

The Red Rajah and his companion were going at full speed down it, and the former turned his head to ascertain the cause of the shouting.

The next moment his horse tripped over a rolling stone, and came headlong down on the hard road, throwing its rider over on his head, and rolling over him.

A shriek from Marguerite, as the horse fell, and she tried to pull up.

But the wild thoroughbred, near his stable, could not be halted by those tiny hands. He carried her on, still shrieking, to the mansion below, near the ford, where he stopped, snorting and trembling, before the porch, to the terror and astonishment of the old colonel's stable household.

Claude found himself beside the fallen horseman, all in a whirl of bewilderment. From the sudden recognition to the terrible accident, hardly ten seconds had elapsed.

It came like a flash.

The haughty cavalier of a moment before lay in the midst of the hard rocky road, a stream of blood welling from his head, as it lay on a jagged stone; the lady's horse was pulling down the road below; Claude was pulling up his own animal to run to the assistance of the fallen man; and all of this happened in an instant of time.

Now the fallen horse began to struggle furiously to rise. Full of oats, and untired, he did not lie still and wait to be helped, although he had fallen with his feet up hill. He lashed out with his iron-bound hoofs, striking his stunned rider again and again.

Before Claude could rush to his head, he had struck the fallen man four or five times, the hoofs echoing with horrible, crashing thunder.

But the prostrate horseman never felt the blows. He was completely insensible.

Claude's horse ran off down the hill, and his master succeeded at last in quieting the frantic struggles of the other. He did not dare to encourage him to rise, till help came.

The poor gentleman lay with his body half under the horse, and could not be moved without great danger of his head being struck by the animal's hoofs. So Claude was compelled to hold down the horse's head to the ground, and wait for assistance.

While he did so, he examined the face of the fallen man intently.

It was the Don Gregorio, he had known. That was certain. Pale and lifeless as the face was, he could not be mistaken in that. There was the same haughty outline, the same long, curving mustache.

But if it was Don Gregorio, if it was the Red Rajah, another conviction forced itself on his unwilling mind as he gazed.

This man was his own brother, and no impostor. The longer he looked, the more certain he grew. He wondered how it was that he had never suspected it before. A great tenderness came over him, as he remembered how the Rajah had saved his life, while Claude was doing his utmost against his.

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"Do not think of it—such things happen every day. It is only the way of the world."

There was an untold depth of bitterness and sorrow in her tone. He did not dare to look at her, but leaned his head on his hand with a groan.

"You have acted as most would have done; and as wisdom is only bought by experience, I will be wiser for the future. Do not blame yourself too severely, my lord; it all does not rest on you. Others—the dead and the living have alike erred, yet I suppose they thought they were acting for the best. Let us be thankful it is no worse—we have both cause!"

"Oh, Norma!"

"You have got a fortune and a title, and do not need to make a *mariage de convenance*; and I have discovered it all in time; so things are not so bad, my lord, as they might be."

"Oh, Norma! What a villain I must seem in your eyes!"

"A villain! Oh, not at all; it is a common thing enough, and habit redeems every thing. Perhaps we may both live to be thankful things have ended as they have."

"But your father, Norma?"

"My father loves me well enough to sacrifice even his long-cherished plan at my wish. I have only to say I do not wish this engagement to be fulfilled, and he will leave me as free as air."

"Norma, did you ever love me?" he asked—his man's vanity, as she rightly judged, wounded by her apparent coldness; for when men, the generous creatures! renounce the woman who has once told them she loved them, they like to think of her as pining away, and dying of a broken heart, and all that sort of thing, for their sake; and Lord Alfred Earnecliffe, though an English peer, was just made of the same clay as his more plebeian brethren.

"My lord," she said, with a dark, bright flash of her eye that reminded him of Jacquette, "you have no right to ask that question!"

"Perhaps not, but I fancy there has been little love lost on your side, and that you are very glad to be rid of me!"

"Ah," she said, with a half-smile, "did I not say your masculine vanity would be wounded? Confess, now, it would be balm of Gilead for you to see me shedding floods of tears, and bemoaning like a tragic heroine my blind fate."

"No, I hope I am not quite so selfish. Since we must part, I am glad you mind so little—yes, I am!" he said, trying hard to convince himself he spoke the truth.

"Thank you! And now, my lord, let me ask you a question—do you intend remaining for the present in England?"

"Yes. I rather think so. I am tired of rambling."

"That is well. I want to go abroad and travel for a year or two on the Continent; and if you were going, I should remain where I am. So, when Mrs. Tremain and Emily leave next month, I shall go with them."

"But you are sure your father will make no objections to this overthrow of all his plans?"

"No; on the contrary, I am quite sure he will object, but I think I can persuade him to let me do as I please. One thing I dread, and that is, what the world will say. I am mortified to death to think papa made this unfortunate engagement known."

"It would be better, perhaps, had he not; but the world shall know how it is—that I am a rejected lover. I shall then have the consolation of being pitied by bright eyes and rosy lips without number!"

She smiled—but her smile was as faint and cold as a moonbeam on snow, and she arose, to signify that their interview was at an end.

"You will excuse me, my lord; my head aches, and I'm unable to entertain you just now. As this is probably the last time we will see each other alone, I will bid you good-by, since tonight, as betrothed lovers, we part forever."

She held out her hand. He took it in both of his, and looked sadly in her face. It was strange, now that the desire of his heart was attained, how lonely and grieved he felt.

"It is a hard word to say, Norma, and harder still to think you and I must henceforth meet as strangers."

"You may think so to-night. To-morrow you will rejoice."

"Well, be it so. Farewell, Norma."

"Adieu, my lord."

"Oh, Norma! not that. Say Alfred, as you used to, 'lang syne!'

"Good-by, Alfred. Heaven send you some one you can love, and who will love you."

"A wish, Norma, that will never be fulfilled; but I thank you all the same. And so—"

He shook hands, and, with a last look at the pale, fair face, and tall, graceful figure, he turned, and left her alone.

And so was broken the tie that was to bind those two through life.

It was in a strange state of mind Lord Earnecliffe hurried along to rejoin his friend. Pleasure and regret, and a strange, mortified feeling were at war within, and when he entered the room where Lord Austrey lay stretched on a sofa, solacing himself with a cigar and the last *Punch*, he flung himself into a chair, and looked half moodily at the nonchalant young lord.

"Well, my beloved Damon, what news? What terrible mystery of iniquity has been brought to light? In what state of mind did you leave her peerless highness, Princess Norma?"

"Hadn't you better go on with the catechism? Ask a few more questions before you stop: What is the chief end of man? What do the Scriptures principally teach? Go on, though you don't?"

"Pshaw! what was this mysterious interview all about? If the question is impudent, don't answer it."

"Oh, I will answer it readily enough! It is something you will be very glad to hear. Her peerless highness has rejected the slave, and you behold before you a discarded suitor."

Lord Austrey half rose, and took his cigar between his finger and thumb.

"Eh? What? Just say that again, will you?"

Disbrowe laughed.

"I am discarded, rejected, refused, jilted! Is that plain enough to suit your limited capacity, my young friend?"

Up sprang Lord Austrey to his feet, and, flinging away his cigar, he stretched out his arm, and putting on that enthusiastic expression all Othello's wear, exultingly cried:

"Excellent wench! perdition catch my soul! But I do love thee; and when I love thee not, Chaos is come again!"

What's the rest, Earnecliffe? I haven't seen Othello played lately. Deuce take that cigar! I have burned my fingers."

"What a loss you are to the stage, Austrey! If Nature had not made you a British peer, you would have been a treasure beyond price, to do the high-tragedy business. Have you ever turned your thoughts to the stage as the means of earning an honest living?"

"Bah! don't talk nonsense! I want to hear all the particulars. Are you really, and truly, and seriously jilted?"

"I really, and truly, and seriously am!"

"Good! Fate has turned the cold shoulder to me ever since I was old enough to know the lady; but I felt sure she would smile at last. And she has, you see. Norma's mine!"

"Don't be too sure. She may serve you as she has me."

"No fear. The little Macdonald has better taste. But what reason did the damsel give?"

"None at all, except that I did not love her—and, faith! she hit the right thing in the middle just then. And so the engagement was broken, now and forever. I felt about three inches high at the time, I can tell you!"

"Te Deum! What a slice of good luck for George of Austrey! What is papa going to say about it?"

"Oh! she has promised to make it all right there. She will bring him to view matters in their proper light, she says. She goes abroad with the Tremain's next month."

"Better and better! I'll be an *attache* of that embassy, or know for why. I never was properly thankful before that my maternal ancestor and Mrs. Tremain were twenty-second cousins, or something; but it just suits me exactly now! Won't I console our pretty Norma on the way! 'Make hay while the sun shines'; there's nothing like it," cried Lord George, in a hazy recollection of some proverb.

"Well, I hope you'll be successful, of course," said Disbrowe, feeling dreadfully hypocritical; for he was amazed, he could scarcely tell why, by his friend's resolution of success.

"Successful! Of course I will. There is no time when a girl is more disposed to smile on a new lover than after she has discarded an old one; and, ahen! a Lord George Austrey is not to be come across every day, I flatter myself. So, when Norma comes back to England, you may be ready with your congratulations, my Lord of Guilford and Earnecliffe."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SECRET SORROW.

"I have a secret sorrow here—
A grief I'll ne'er impart;
It leaves no sigh—it sheds no tear,
But it consumes the heart."

THREE days after, Lord Earnecliffe went back to Disbrowe Park, leaving his friend in London—a constant visitor at Tremain House. Whatever Miss Macdonald felt, she had enough of the pride of Albion's stately daughters to conceal; and she rode, and walked, and drove, and went to the theater and the opera nightly; and Lord Austrey was always of their party. His distant relationship to the Tremain's stood him in good stead now, and he took care not to be too particular in his attentions, but to be quite as devoted to Emily Tremain as to Norma Macdonald. He left it to time to ripen their acquaintance to a warmer feeling. And Lord George acted wisely. A handsome face and figure, and gallant bearing, seldom fail to please ladies; and Lord George could be agreeable, not to say fascinating even, when he chose. Miss Macdonald might have the bad taste to be insensitive to his manifold attractions just at present, while the wound her first love had received was still rankling; but there was a good time coming, and Lord George, being none of your fiery mad-headed lovers, was quite content to wait, and console himself with the maxim: "Mieux vaut tard que jamais."

And at the end of the month, having given himself an invitation to join their party, which Emily Tremain—who called him "Cousin George," and considered him delightful—had warmly seconded, they all set off together for France. Norma, too, was not displeased at this new acquisition to their party; for Lord George was an unfailing antidote against *ennui* and depression of spirits, keeping Emily Tremain especially, who had a strong natural taste for the ludicrous, in fits of laughter continually.

Just before starting, Lord George sent an epistle, rather of the short and sweet order, to his friend, to announce his success.

"And Frank," he said, "how is he?"

"Frank is quite well," said Mr. De Vere. "I got him a midshipman's commission, last winter, and he has gone off like a second Jack to seek his fortune. We found Fontelle terribly dull, and your kind invitation came at a most opportune moment. Change of climate may do something for Augusta, whose health is failing rapidly."

"I noticed Miss De Vere was not looking well," said Disbrowe, lowering his voice nearly to a whisper, and an expression, half-angry, half-contemptuous, came over his face. How little she must ever have loved him to forget him so soon!

A life of inaction, of stagnation, was little suited to the gay, volatile nature of Alfred Disbrowe; yet some perverse spirit seemed to possess him now, and hold him in chains at Disbrowe Park. He scarce ever went to London. He visited but little among the neighboring gentry, and seldom ever saw any one at the hall. He rarely rode, or hunted, or quitted home, and altogether became a sort of anchorage—he himself—a Robinson Crusoe, shut up and fortified in his "castle."

The young ladies of the neighborhood pointed, and were terribly mortified to find the handsome and wealthy young peer so insensible to all their fascinations, while the sentimental ones looked upon him with romantic interest, and fell in love with his dark, melancholy eyes, and sighed to comfort him in his solitude.

Having nothing better to do, Disbrowe amused himself with looking after his tenantry and improving his estate; and thus, with lying lazily on a sofa, and smoking no end of cigars, constituted his indolent and aimless life.

He felt a little ashamed of himself sometimes, and his useless existence. But a spell—a languor of mind and body was upon him, and he wanted a motive to make him rise, like another Sampson, and burst his bonds.

So passed the winter; and spring and summer found him still loitering at Disbrowe Park.

At odd times, he received short, spasmodic letters from his friend Austrey, to tell him they were "doing" gondolas in Venice, or

Saint Peter's at Rome, or risking their necks up the great Saint Bernard, or other cold and uncomfortable places in the Alpine Alps. According to his account, their travails were something in the style of the "Dodd Family Abroad"—a continued series of mishaps and misadventures, together with jealous Austrian governments, rampaging Italian beggars, savage and unreasonable couriers, or ferocious, brigandish guides, who would persist in not understanding him—Lord George—when he swore at them in English, and screamed out his directions in the same language. He further went on to express the strongest sort of contempt for the whole Continent, vehemently asserted England, with all its woes, was the only place fit for a rational Christian to live in. As for foreign scenery, he had a poor opinion of it. The Rhine was well enough, but not fit to hold a candle to the Serpentine, and as for Baden, Ramsgate was worth a dozen of it. All this had very little interest for Disbrowe; but the postscript had, where Lord George wound up by informing him Norma was in excellent health and spirits, and "his affair" was progressing as "well as could be expected." At first, this used to invariably put Disbrowe in a fume; but he got used to it after a time, and almost as indifferent about Norma as the rest. Her father had joined them, evidently quite reconciled to the broken-off match, and, what was better still, great friends with the volatile young lord. It was quite uncertain when they would come back, but probably not until late the next autumn.

Of his American friends, since his arrival in England, he had heard nothing. As time cooled and toned down his feelings, he began to regret the hasty manner in which he had left his uncle's roof, who harshly as he had treated her whom Disbrowe never named now, even in his own mind, had been always kind to him.

Therefore, in a fit of penitence, during the previous winter, he had written him a long and cordial letter, urging him to come to England, and visit him at Disbrowe Park, and bring Augusta and little Oriole with him.

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He was cruelly wronged, sir; but you acted from a sense of duty, and were not so much to blame. Let the dead rest; I had rather not speak of her."

"Her loss, too, has preyed on the mind of Augusta," said Mr. De Vere, recurring to the former subject; "and, combined with the death of her brother, has increased the depression of her spirits, and left her as you are. Al! Alfred, I am not very happy in my children!"

Disbrowe sat with averted head, his eyes shaded by his hand, and made no reply.

"And my poor, poor, wronged Jacquette! My high-spirited, broken-hearted girl! Oh, Alfred! I can never forgive myself for the great wrong I have done her," groaned Mr. De Vere.

"She was cruelly wronged, sir; but you acted from a sense of duty, and were not so much to blame. Let the dead rest; I had rather not speak of her."

"Well, I guess I do! I wish you would live here all the time, and not go back to Fontelle."

"But, it's not my house, monkey, and so I can't. It is Lord Earnecliffe's, you know."

"Well—but he would let you stay, I guess. I mean to ask him, anyway."

"But that is not polite. People should not invite themselves. You must wait until he asks you."

Oriole gave a little impatient shrug.

"It's such a bother being polite, and I don't see any good in it, either. See here, grandpa—cousin Alfred isn't married, is he?"

"Not as I am aware of, my little nettle—why?"

"Disbrowe sat with averted head, his eyes shaded by his hand, and made no reply.

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JILTED.

BY TOM GOULD.

They ask me why I look so sad,
But all around me seemeth glad;
Alack, that they should ask me why—
For I must answer with a sigh,
I'm jilted!

Unlucky fate for mortal man,
That blithesome, laughing maidens can
Be cruel, when they should be kind,
And serve one so—bad, never mind—
I'm jilted!

She was as fair as fair could be;
She was a beauty, and to me!
Her beauty never can atone—
Since she has left me here to groan—
I'm jilted!

This true she had a pretty eye,
And used it well when I was by;
But oh! she fixed it on another—
Alas! that word I can not smother—
I'm jilted!

She also had a pretty face,
And was a dragon—grace—
With her But oh! when her stays
Had she a spark—and Cupid says,
I'm jilted!

Let it be so; nor ask me more;
For that's a point on which I'm sore;
Whene'er you tell it, think of me,
And softly whisper, Why, you see,
He's jilted!

The Ranger's Revenge.

A STORY OF COLONIAL VIRGINIA.

BY CAPTAIN CHARLES HOWARD.

The stormy debate was ended. The irresistible eloquence of Patrick Henry had carried the bitter resolutions against the odious Stamp Act, and the members of the assembly, still more or less excited over the tempestuous session, were deserting the old hall for their respective couches, for the debate had trended far into the night.

Fairfax Winthrop was the youngest member of the Virginia Assembly, and, as he emerged from the House of Burgesses, conscious of having performed a service for his native state, by supporting Henry's resolutions, a youth, whose hand clutched a riding-whip, stepped to his side.

The young assemblyman did not notice the youth in the crowd, until he uttered his name.

"Why, Courtney! what brings you hither?"

"Sad, sad tidings," replied the youth, looking up into Winthrop's face with a sad expression, and taking the young patriot's hand, he gently drew him aside.

"Yes, yes, I am the bearer of bad news," he continued.

"Well, tell it, Courtney, and do not keep me in suspense," commanded Winthrop.

"Then Estelle Hyat is—is—"

The boy faltered.

"Is what?" demanded the young man, clutching his arm until he winced with pain.

"Dead!"

"Dead?"

"Dead!"

"My God!" cried Winthrop, staggered by the dreadful and unexpected blow.

"Courtney, I can not credit you."

"Alas! I speak the truth," said the boy.

For a moment grief swayed the strong man like a storm-tossed reed, and slowly he uncovered his eyes, and looked down upon the youthful messenger, upon whose rosy cheek a tear glistened.

"When did she die, Courtney?" he asked, in tremulous tones.

"This afternoon," was the reply.

"And they wait me there?"

"Yes."

"My place is there," said the Virginian. "How lightless my future seems now. Oh, boy, it is a terrible thing to lose the only woman you ever loved!"

"Terrible!" echoed the youth.

A short time later, a man and boy were riding like the wind down a gloomy road.

Estelle Hyat was the promised bride of the young and rising assemblyman. He was the only son of a wealthy and prominent Virginian; she the sole daughter of a farmer, in humble circumstances, whose home graced the loveliest valley among the mountains.

One year prior to the inauguration of our story, Fairfax Winthrop accidentally encountered the mountain beauty, and his noble heart, untainted with the crimes of everyday life, went out to her in hallowed love.

Often, therefore, they met among the mountains, and at last he made bold to enter Harold Hyat's home as the lover of his daughter, and met a decided and unfeigned welcome.

And now, to think that the rude hand of death should strike her down upon the threshold of the fruition of hopes he had nursed so long! It was a terrible blow to the young man, and drove him, unresisting to the precipice of insanity.

The gray streaks of dawn were illuminating the East, when the distracted lover reached the house of mourning, and Courtney Favorite led him through the silent hall into the death-chamber.

The beautiful dead was alone.

Gently the messenger approached the couch, and throwing back the coverlet, displayed the fairest face, that ever grew cold beneath the hand of the dread destroyer. A groan welled from Winthrop's heart, and bowing his head, he hid his eyes until he could calmly look upon the marble face he had often kissed in life.

At length he slowly withdrew his hand, and found himself alone—Courtney having left him alone with his dead.

He threw himself beside the couch, and kissed the cold brow of Estelle Hyat. And thus her parents found him when they entered the silent chamber.

He remained through the day at the house of death, and at nightfall mounted his steed for a ride across the mountains to his own home.

Estelle, the people said, was the victim of heart disease. She was not alone when stricken. Mark Kilton, a young mountaineer and wood-ranger—a playmate of Estelle's in childhood—sat with her in one of the chambers of her humble home. Suddenly, according to this ranger's story, she started from his side, and staggered backward with a shriek. He darted forward, caught her fragile form, and bore it, already insinuated, into the couch.

This was the substance of the ranger's narration, in which everybody put explicit faith, for he had, to all external appearances, proved himself a friend to the stricken family.

The matchless queen of night was soaring majestically toward the star-gemmed zenith, as Fairfax Winthrop rode across the mountains, with the heaviest heart that ever beat in the bosom of man.

Suddenly the sound of an approaching horse fell upon his ears, and in the center of a deep gorge, ill-lighted by the mellow rays of the moon, he drew rein, resolving to meet the horseman there.

The sounds grew more distinct, and, at length, the new-comer entered the gorge.

Fairfax Winthrop had drawn rein in the shade, which did not screen him from the sharp eyes of the night-rider, for he suddenly paused before the young assemblyman, and leveled a pistol at his head.

Then Winthrop recognized the stranger.

It was Mark Kilton, the mountaineer.

"What means this mysterious action, Mark?" demanded the patriot, to whom the ranger was well known.

"It means, sir, that I want to tell you a secret," hissed the stranger.

"A secret, Mark Kilton? And is it necessary that, during the revealing of that secret, whatever it may be, a pistol must be leveled at my head?"

"It is, sir," answered the ranger.

"Then I shall submit to the necessity."

A moment's silence followed, and the ranger leaned forward on his horse's neck.

"Fairfax, Winthrop, I am leaving this country," he said.

"Never to return?"

"Never to return."

"What drives you hence?"

"Ah! that's the secret I'm going to divulge. Listen," and he lowered his voice.

"Winthrop, I loved Estelle Hyat long before you encountered her. My love was as holy as yours; but your heretofore and position dazzled the poor girl's eyes, and drew her from my side. I learned to hate you, and one midnight I swore that she should never wed you."

"Halt!"

"Hullo!" That means to stop perambulating what I know from! War address in me, or war yer speakin' confidentially to yourself, young man?" asked Crockett, gravely turning to the astonished sentinel.

The latter, however, was saved the necessity of a reply, for at that moment the General, who had overheard the brief conversation, and doubtless recognized the voice, appeared from within the canvas and ordered the sentinel to pass "Colonel Crockett."

"So I'm Colonel Crockett, am I?" muttered Davy, as he started forward and grasped the hand of "the Old Man," as he was usually styled.

"Well, General," he cried, "you sent for me, an' I hev come!"

"And most heartily welcome you are, Colonel," said the General, cordially.

"Colonel again," muttered Davy, aside; then, turning in his usual abrupt manner to General Houston, he said, with the utmost gravity:

"I am a villain—a triumphant one!

Fairfax Winthrop, I have struck you through her. The ranger has had his revenge, and, in distant lands, he will glout over it. I am going now. If you draw a weapon or dare to follow me, I'll send a bullet to your brain."

As Mark Kilton finished, he rode slowly away, but with face turned, and pistol directed at his rival.

"This afternoon," was the reply.

"And they wait me there?"

"Yes."

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"What does this mean?" demanded Winthrop, bestowing an angry look upon the hermit.

"It means that this man has restored Estelle to life," said Hyat.

Winthrop's inanimate burden fell from his grasp, and he sprang to the ground.

"Explain!" he cried, clutching the old man's arm.

"I sold yonder dead man a subtle poison

—that counterfeited death for two days,

when death silently ensues. I heard of the young girl's sudden death, and hastened hither. I saw the work of my poison. It was not too late to use the antidote. I used it, and praised to God! she lives."

"I took vengeance too soon," said Fairfax.

"To the newly-made Colonel the commandant wished to intrust the execution of his plans for discovering the truth or falsity of the report, fully trusting to Davy's well-

"No, boy," said the old man. "I know him to be a double-murderer, and you are not guilty of a dark crime."

I have but little to add."

A few months later, Fairfax Winthrop led Estelle Hyat to the altar, and during the Revolution, he rendered his country efficient service, bequeathing a glorious record and a noble name to several proud families of Virginia.

known shrewdness to bring him through, and thus earn the title he had given him.

The following afternoon, about an hour by sun, three men, dressed in a manner half-civilized, half-savage, rode up to the Don's fine mansion and requested permission to stay for the night.

The times were unsettled, and every man was suspicious, to a greater or less degree, of those around him, and hence for some time the Mexican refused point-blank to grant the request.

Finally, however, one of the strangers drew the Mexican aside, and whispered a few words in his ear that brought about a decided differently aspect of affairs.

"Understand me, gentlemen," said the Don, "I take no part in this struggle, but, still, it would be unnatural for me to refuse a night's lodging to men who are on their way to fight for the land of my birth. And you, sir," he continued, turning to Davy

the talismanic words, "if you have spoken falsely, and are one of the Texan army, instead of being on your way to assist my countrymen, I still trust that you will recognize the fact that I may be with my people in sympathy and yet remain neutral in the struggle."

"The greaser dug me in the short ribs thar, Ginal," said Davy, when he subsequently related the conversation to "Old Sam." "An' I tell you I felt meaner'n a sheep killin' cur."

An am*re* repast was set before the recruits for the Mexican army, (?) to which simple justice was done, and an hour or so afterward they sought the couches that had been provided for them.

Davy was apparently sleeping soundly, when, about the middle of the night, the host came rapidly into the room, and after waking him, communicated the astounding intelligence that the house was surrounded by a Texan force of half a score men.

At the same moment, a clear, ringing voice hailed and demanded admission, stating that there were Mexican soldiers in the house, and that they were wanted.

Of course Crockett and his companions were dreadfully alarmed, they being totally unarmed, and hence capable of making no resistance.

In the most natural manner in the world they begged that if the Don could furnish them with weapons that he would do so, stating that they would defend the house to the last, or else cut their way through the enemy.

The boy was getting impatient, and already they were thundering at the door, demanding admittance.

"We must hev the weapons, Don," said Davy, "or ye see we're bound to tell them fellers outside as how you war sendin' us on through to the border. I'm powerful sorry, but—"

"Say no more, gentlemen!" exclaimed the Mexican, now thoroughly decided by the frequent heresy of his sentiments, and the indecency of not a few of his narratives. Nor is it surprising that he should feel irritated, and vexed, and mortified that such a reception should be given to a work of which he thought he might be proud, and from which he drew so great an emolument (\$3,000). But no respect for the services he had before rendered to religion or virtue, by his papers in the "Adventurer" and his "Notes to Swift's Letters," could obliterate the impression of his apostasy in the remarks which he introduced into the account of the "Voyage Round the World," and it could not but aggravate the pain which both his friends and himself felt, when they considered that whatever was objectionable in this work, had come from its pen without provocation, and without necessity, either from the nature of the undertaking, or the expectation of the public.

Tasso had a vast and prolific imagination, accompanied with an excessively hypocondriac temperament. The